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atists. His older rivals, Théophile, Racan, and Gombaud, do not constitute a sufficiently large or prolific group. The first of these died in 1626. It is when the others were joined by Mairet, Corneille, Rotrou, Tristan, Pierre Du Ryer, and Scudéry that a definite step is made in the development of the drama with a more accurate psychology, more careful construction, and a greater purity of thought and expression, often accompanied by a no less popular *préciosité*. These qualities, answering the demands of an audience whose refinement was steadily increasing, won success for the plays of the new school, while those of the old leader appeared correspondingly antiquated. It is not surprising if the change brought out expressions of "fiel, rage, et douleur."

To Hardy's jealousy of his young rivals, as here described, was probably due the faint praise he is said to have bestowed on Corneille's *Mélite*, which, according to the *Mercure galant* he called a "jolie bagatelle," according to Fontenelle, "une assez jolie farce."[4] At the same time his feeling may have been exaggerated by Du Ryer, whose tone indicates a personal hostility to the old dramatist, produced by professional jealousy, for he, too, had attempted the drama,[5] or by his friendship for the younger generation, among whom were numbered his son, Pierre, and his friend, Tristan l'Hermite, to whom he wrote two complimentary poems published in the *Heures dérobees*.[6]

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SILENCE AND SOLITUDE IN THE POEMS OF LEOPARDI.

It has often been said that the greatness of a man does not depend upon the pleasures he enjoys but upon the sufferings he undergoes. Among Italians who prove the truth of this saying none stand forth more clearly than Dante and Leopardi. Both drained the cup of bitterness to the dregs. Dante's lofty patriotism and uncompromising uprightness of character brought upon him endless woe during his days on earth, and Leopardi's physical and mental sufferings doomed him to a brief life full of misery. And yet had Leopardi and Dante suffered less, the world would probably have been deprived of two of its greatest poets. While Dante sang the sorrows of sinners in the other world and the happiness of the blessed, Leopardi sang the bitter fate of mankind in this world of ours. It is true the latter poet sang first of all his own misfortunes and his own despair, but behind the manifestations of his individual sufferings, the accents of universal misery and sorrow ring out as clearly as they do in Hamlet's famous soliloquy. Leopardi was a pessimistic poet—he has been called even *the* poet of pessimism. This pessimism sprang from the profound conviction that although man always strives after happiness and his great need is happiness, yet he can never attain the object of his strivings. According to Leopardi, man is sure of nothing but of sorrow and death.

My present aim is not to enter upon a philosophical analysis of our poet's pessimism. I wish to call attention to two particular traits, namely, silence and solitude, which are profoundly stamped upon his poetry. Silence and solitude, indeed, seem to have been among the frequent means by which he gave expression to his pessimism.

In the following I shall adhere to the chronological order of the poems and I shall begin with the *Frammento* of 1816.

In the midst of an almost universal silence a maiden goes forth alone in search of love. All nature smiles around her and the only sounds heard are those of the rustling of leaves and the sad song of a nightingale. Suddenly the landscape changes: A thunderstorm springs up accompanied by a pelting rain. Darkness reigns everywhere and the maiden's heart is filled with fear—so much so that when the storm abates at last, she is dead, turned to stone—'Ella era di pietra'—as the poet sings.

Among various other features of this poem, there are two which impress themselves strongly upon the reader's mind: They are a deep silence

[4] For a discussion of these criticisms see Rigal, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–61.

[5] In his pastorals, *La Vengeance des satyres*, Paris, 1614, and *Le Mariage d'amour*, Paris, 1631.

[6] *Pour Monsieur Tristan* and *A Monsieur Tristan sonnet.*

which enframes, so to say, the whole poem and the weird solitude of the love-stricken maiden. She walks alone—from joy to fear and from fear to death. When the poem opens, silence reigns everywhere :

> Spento il diurno raggio in occidente,
> E queto il fumo delle ville, e queta
> De' cani era la voce e della gente ;

A little further on, the maiden is seen walking alone :

> Sola tenea la taciturna via
> La donna, e il vento che gli odori spande,
> Molle passar sul volto si sentia.

Suddenly a threatening cloud appears :

> Un nugol torbo, padre di procella,
> Sorgea di dietro ai monti, e crescea tanto,
> Che più non si scopria luna nè stella.

The end of the poem describes the maiden's death :

> E si rivolse indietro. E in quel momento
> Si spense il lampo, e tornò buio l'etra,
> E acchetossi il tuono, e stette il vento.
> Taceva il tutto ; ed ella era di pietra.

The next poem—*Il Primo Amore*—is usually printed after the *Frammento*, and was composed in 1817. Here Leopardi sings his first love—its joys and much more the sufferings it brought to him ; the torments it made him undergo during the day and, still more, in the silence of the night. It is in the silence of the night also—or perhaps more precisely, towards morning that he is overcome by a vague presentiment of the departure of his beloved from his parents' home where she had been visiting. When at last she is gone, he drags his trembling knees through the silent room and his solitude is complete :

> Orbo rimaso allor, mi ranicchiai
> Palpitando nel letto e, chiusi gli occhi,
> Strinsi il cor con la mano, e sospirai.
> Poscia traendo i tremuli ginocchi
> Stupidamente per la muta stanza,
> Ch'altro sarà, dicea, che il cor mi tocchi ?

In solitude he mourns over the loss of his love :

> Solo il mio cor piaceami, e col mio core
> In un perenne ragionar sepolto,
> Alla guardia seder del mio dolore.
> E l'occhio a terra chino o in sé raccolto,
> Di riscontrarsi fuggitivo e vago
> Nè in leggiadro soffria nè in turpe volto :
> Che la illibata, la candida imago
> Turbare egli temea pinta nel seno,
> Come all'aure si turba onde e lago.

We pass on to the poem *All' Italia*, in which the two features spoken of are less marked than in the preceding poems. Still, Italy, figured in the shape of a woman, is solitary and forsaken :

> Siede in terra negletta e sconsolata,
> Nascondendo la faccia
> Tra le ginocchia, e piange.

Moreover, Leopardi imagining that his dear Italy is abandoned by her children and that no one is willing to fight for her, calls out in his lone despair :

> L'armi, qua l'armi : io solo
> Combatterò, procomberò sol io.

And, finally, the poet Simonides singing the glorious fate of the three hundred Spartans, rises before the reader, sad and lonely, the image of Leopardi himself bewailing the fate of Italy.

The poem entitled *Il Passero Solitario* is chronologically the first one in which Leopardi gives relatively full expression to his overwhelming solitude. Although published for the first time in the Naples edition of 1835, it occupies there the foremost place among the idyls which were composed in 1819. It is probable, however, according to Straccali, that the poem was worked over at a later date, perhaps between 1831 and 1835. From his frequent allusions to them we may infer that Leopardi was very fond of birds. The poem begins with an account of a lonely bird perched on the top of an ancient tower in the country, singing all day long until nightfall. Spring is in the air and fills men's hearts with tenderness and love. Birds, sheep and cattle rejoice in the glory of spring, with the exception of one lonely bird that keeps away from its companions, preferring to pass its youth in song and solitude. Beginning here the poet makes a comparison between the lonely bird and himself : He also flees amusement, laughter and love ; he cares in nowise for them and yet he does not know why (*non so come*, l. 22). He also passes the springtime of his life away from his companions, and while the young people of his native city are celebrating a festal day, he goes forth

into the country all by himself, putting off his pleasures to the future. Meanwhile the sun is setting and that setting seems to indicate that youth has vanished.

The choice of the lonely bird as the symbol of the solitary singer is a happy one. Moreover, the effect of solitude is heightened by the strong contrast between that sentiment and the beauty of spring and youth. Judging by the *Passero Solitario*, the poet's leaning towards solitude was instinctive rather than deliberate—as appears from the following lines :

Sollazzo e riso,
Delle novella età dolce famiglia,
E te german di giovinezza, amore,
Sospiro acerbo de' provetti giorni,
Non curo, io *non so come.*

And perhaps also in the last lines :

Ahi pentirommi, e spesso
Ma sconsolato, volgerommi indietro.

L' Infinito usually follows after *Il Passero Solitario*. In this poem we also find an allusion to solitude and silence, for the scene is a lonely hill (*ermo colle*) and a hedge behind which the poet imagines that he discerns infinity with all its

sovrumani
Silenzio, e *profondissima quiete.*

The idea of great silence occurs again a little further on in the same poem, when a comparison is made between the wind rushing in the trees and the infinite silence just spoken of :

E come il vento
Odo stormir tra queste piante, io quello
Infinito silenzio e questa voce
Vo comparando.

The poem was written, like the *Passero Solitario*, in 1819, and it may be of interest to recall the fact that the deserted hill of which the poet speaks actually existed at the time of Leopardi and that he often visited it. At present the site of the hill is considerably changed, according to a note in Straccali's edition.

Still another poem in which the sentiment of solitude as well as silence appears clearly is the poem entitled *Alla Luna*. Scientific minds may find it difficult to imagine the state of soul of one who addresses himself repeatedly and passionately to that luminary. And yet, a mind no less scientific than that of Goethe, did not disdain to make appeal to the moon in accents of deepest despair :

Oh sähst du, voller Mondenschein,
Zum letzten Mal auf meine Pein.

And, among many other instances, who does not recall that famous stanza in the *Rubaiyat?*

Yon rising Moon that looks for us again—
How oft hereafter will she wax and wane ;
How oft hereafter rising look for us
Through this same Garden—and for one in vain !

The moon has always exercised and still exercises a strange and powerful fascination over the human mind—and especially over the minds of poets. The poetic suggestion of the moon seems to result from the mysteriousness which surrounds that luminary and the ominous silence and the deep repose which man is wont to associate with it. There is, moreover, a feeling of loneliness, which communicates itself to us as we contemplate the moon. I believe it is Emerson who says that if one wishes to be alone one should look at the moon. The romantic poets and those who sing of the weariness of life and its sadness—the pessimistic poets—all have addressed their passionate appeals to the moon ; they have, it seems, discovered between themselves and her a secret affinity and sympathy. Such was evidently the case with Leopardi, in whose poems we find numerous instances of the mysterious communion and intimacy spoken of.

The poem entitled *Il Sogno*, shows how our poet has a dream towards morning, in which his beloved appears to him. After a brief conversation with her, he discovers that she is dead—that he has been conversing with her shadow only. In this instance silence and solitude are not in great prominence. The final picture, however, is that of the lonely poet, awaking in the midst of silence from his harrowing dream :

Or finalmente addio.
Nostre misere menti e nostre salme
Son disgiunte in eterno. A me non vivi,
E mai più non vivrai : già ruppe il fato
La fe che mi giurasti. Allor d'angoscia
Grider volendo, e spasimando, e pregne
Di sconsolato pianto le pupille,
Dal sonno mi disciolsi. Ella negli occhi
Pur mi restava, e nell' incerto raggio
Del Sol vederla io mi credeva ancora.

Whether or not Leopardi passed the summer of 1819 in the country cannot be definitely ascertained. But whatever the truth may be regarding this matter, the poem entitled *La Vita Solitaria* shows the poet living in the country, and the title indicates sufficiently what life he led there. In the morning he is wakened by the gentle patter of the rain against his windows: Nature still offers to him some slight consolation, although she prefers to look upon happiness rather than misfortune. Surrounded by nature, the poet sometimes betakes himself to a solitary spot, where he may forget the world:

Talor m'assido in solitaria parte,
Sovra un rialto, al margine d'un lago
Di taciturne piante incoronato.
Ivi, quando il meriggio in ciel si volve,
La sua tranquilla imago il Sol dipinge,
Ed erba o foglia non si crolla al vento,
E non onda increspársi, e non cicala
Strider, né batter penna augello in ramo,
Né farfalla ronzar, né voce o moto
Da presso né da lunge odi né vedi.
Tien quelle rive altissima quiete;
Ond' io quasi me stesso e il mondo obblio
Sedendo immoto; e già mi par che sciolte
Giaccian le membre mie, né spirto o senso
Più le commova, e lor quiete antica
Co' silenzi del loco si confonda.

The silence and the solitude of the place recall to the poet the reason for his fondness for it, namely, the loss of the sentiment once sweetest to him, love. Sometimes this sentiment comes back to him, especially at night when he hears the silvery notes of a village maiden. The idea of night leads up to an address to the moon, to whom the poet directs these final words:

Me spesso rivedrai solingo e muto
Errar pe' boschi o per le verdi rive,
O seder sovra l'erbe, assai contento
Se core e lena a sospirar m'avanza.

Among the remaining poems I shall cite first *La sera del dì di festa*. On the evening of a festive day—when "the lanes are silent and the lamps are few"—the poet thinks of his beloved whom he imagines as sleeping and dreaming of her triumphs of the day. He has no hope that her thoughts are turned to him: she, like all nature, has forgotten him. Suddenly he hears a belated artisan singing, and this solitary song reminds him of the passing of all things—the fame of his forefathers and the fame of Rome are all now hushed in silence. I quote a few lines in order to show how silence and solitude form an essential part of this poem:

Dolce e chiara è la notte e senza vento,
E queta sovra i tetti e in mezzo agli orti
Posa la luna, e di lontan rivela
Serena ogni montagna. O donna mia,
Già tace ogni sentiero, e pei balconi
Rara traluce la notturna lampa:
Tu dormi, che t'accolse agevol sonno
Nelle tue chete stanze; e non ti morde
Cura nessuna; e già non sai né pensi
Quanta piaga m'apristi in mezzo al petto.
.
. . . . Ahi, per la via
Odo non lunge il solitario canto
Dell' artigian
.
Ecco è fuggito
Il dí festivo, ed al festivo il giorno
Volgar succede, e se ne porta il tempo
Ogni umano accidente. Or dov' è il suono
Di que' popoli antichi? or dov' è il grido
De' nostri avi famosi, e il grande impero
Di quelle Roma, e l'armi e il fragorio
Che n'andò per la terra e l'oceano?
Tutto è pace e silenzio, e tutto posa
Il mondo, e più di lor non si ragiona.

There is another poem from the title of which, *Canto Notturne di un pastore errante dell' Asia*, we may infer that silence and solitude reign about the shepherd who represents Leopardi himself. Here are the opening lines:

Che fai tu, luna, in ciel? dimmi, che fai,
Silenziosa luna?
Sorgi la sera, e vai,
Contemplando i deserti; indi ti posi.

And further on, still addressing the moon:

Pur tu, solinga, eterna peregrina,
Che si pensosa sei, tu forse intendi,
Questo viver terreno,
Il partir nostro, il sospirar, che sia;
.
E tu certo comprendi
Il perchè delle cose, e vedi il frutto
Del mattin, della sera,
Del tacito, infinito andar del tempo.
.
Spesso quand' io ti miro
Star così muta in sul deserto piano,
Che, in suo giro lontano, al ciel confina . . .
.

Dico fra me pensando:
A che tante facelle?
Che fa l'aria infinita, e quel profondo
Infinito seren? che vuol dir questa
Solitudine immensa?

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VENETIAN *BUSINELLO* = ITALIAN *EMISSARIO*.

In the Cicogna collection at Venice cod. 3637 (Correr 3350) is a series of papers dated Sept. 28, 1836, and signed by the celebrated architect G. Casoni. Under the general title "Notizia storica dell' Emissario al Fiume Sile denominato il Businello" are collected recopies of this essay and the various notes used by Casoni in the construction of it. It seems that in the diversion of the Sile's course, incident upon the exclusion of fresh water from the Venetian lagoon, the pestiferous effects produced by the mixture of the river in the stagnant pools of salt water were not entirely overcome, but simply transferred to the eastward to the territory surrounding the river's new mouth. It was accordingly suggested, as the result of agitation culminating in 1695, that the burden be divided, by distributing the flow of the river through the new and the old beds, by means of a gate-way opened at their junction. The adoption of this proposal led to a discussion on the reform which lasted with decision for and against the fiume, for some 150 years. This gate-way appears in the documents on the subject under the name *Businello*; and the varying treatment of this term by the successive authorities invites inquiry as to what it really means. Casoni refers to it seven times simply as *il Businello*, e. g. loc. cit. no. 4, doc. 4, 1ª: "1695, 5 decembre decretò l'apertura del Businello ossia di una catterata, dalla quale una parte sola dell' acqua del Sile si ottenesse." Here also the name is interpreted carefully by the succeeding phrase; and while we have the undecisive "di esso Businello" (ibid. doc. 5, 2ᵇ, 4ª), "di riattirare quel Businello" (ibid.) and "Questo Businello produsse, etc." (ibid. 3ᵇ, doc. 7), as a rule there is a distinct apology for the word (ibid. doc. 6, 1ª): "l'apertura di un emissario che venne denominato Businello, val a dire l'apertura alla sponda destra di una catterata larga piedi 9, alta piedi 3." So far indeed is Casoni from feeling it a common noun that on five occasions he uses it as a proper name in apposition (ibid. 4, 4, 1ª): "Questo nuovo Emissario Businello soggiaque a grandissime vicende"; (ibid. doc. 6, 1, title) "Promenoria dell' Emissario del Sile Businello"; (doc. 4, 1ᵇ) "l'acqua proveniente dall' Emissario Businello"; (doc. 5, 3ᵇ) "Anche senza la riapertura dell' Emissario Businello"; (ibid. 4ª) "gli effetti prodotti dall' emissario Businello."

Antonio Tadini writing in 1819 likewise recognizes the exotic character of the word: in his title "Dell' Emissario del Sile volgarmente detto il Businello" (Milano, Paolo Giusti, 1819, 59 pp.); (p. 4, l. 15) "in via di sperimenti si aprì uno sfogatoio chiamato il Businello"; (p. 57) "l'Emissario o Businello del Sile"; while elsewhere (pp. 5, 6, 7, 8, 33, 34, 41, 44) he uses simply: "il Businello" or "il B. del Sile." The Alvisopoli in the same year in Venice published an "Esame delle opinioni di Benedetto Castelli e di Alfonso Borelli sulle lagune di Venezia, aggiuntavi (pp. 99–142) un appendice sulla riapertura del Businello"; and among some 27 occurrences of the term we find "del nuovo Businello" (p. 104), "del Businello secondo" (p. 105, note), and the adverbial expression "a Businello aperto" (p. 116), which are in the direction of considering *Businello* a common noun. Filiasi again (Riflessioni sopra i fiumi e le lagune, Giuseppe Pignotti, Venezia, 1817) is in doubt (p. 45, l. 7): "uno sbocco si aprisse ad esso nella laguna, detto il Businello," with one possible occurrence of the common noun form (p. 64, l. 1): "Chiuso nel 1769 il Businello del Sile." The fact that in all of these works the word is capitalized is, of course, unimportant; not only because there was as yet little regularity in capitalization generally, but because such words as *fiume, taglio, mare, emissario*, pure common nouns, are nevertheless favored with large initials in these same books.

In any case, reference to the original documents in the discussion would have determined for them the precise status of the term. The papers of the agitation previous to the construction of the dam, as well, apparently, as some of the deliberations of